

Summer Reading 2009 Institute of Notre Dame English Department--Required Readings

These are the assigned books from the English department. Any questions please email Sister Jane Cayer, SSND at jcayer@indofmd.org.

FRESHMEN - Class of 2013

#111-Honors English 9: *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte

#112- Language and Literature 9: *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith

#113-Language and Literature 9: *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith

All incoming freshmen are required to read the book **assigned to the course for which they have been registered**. (Please refer to the course number for all books.) Teachers will check the reading during the first week of September. In order to prepare for project assignments and discussion, please write 6 entries in a Reader Response Journal. Each entry should fill at least one loose leaf page. (You may type your entries if you prefer.) Also make note of any questions you have. Bring your journal and questions to school the first day of class in September. A Reader Response Journal is a way to keep track of what you think and feel about what you read. The journal can be a notebook or individual sheets of paper fastened together, whichever is more convenient for you. We ask you to keep a journal to help you remember what you read, what you were thinking as you read, how you felt about it, and what connections you might see between the reading and your own life. You should try to write in your journal several times as you read the novel and include your ideas at the various stages. You can write about a character, what you think will happen next, which characters you like or don't like, questions that you have about what you have read, or just how you feel about reading it. Another purpose that the journal serves is to help the teacher know that you have read the novel.

SOPHOMORES – Class of 2012

#121- Honors American Literature:

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald **and** *A Farewell to Arms* by Ernest Hemingway

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Is Gatsby great? Why or why not? Who thinks Gatsby is great? Why?
2. Do you trust Nick as the narrator? Why/why not?
3. Describe East and West Egg. What are their similarities and differences?
4. Find at least 3 symbols in this book and describe why you believe they are symbols?
5. What do you believe the theme of the book is and why?
6. Keep a list of characters, their traits, and interactions with each other.
7. Write down any questions you have while reading the book.

A Farewell to Arms by Ernest Hemingway

Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. What do you think of Catherine's character and why?

2. Keep track of each season and what each season brings to war and to the relationships in the novel.
3. Identify at least 2 symbols in the novel and what you believe they symbolize.
4. There are several themes of the novel, identify at least 2 and track how they are shown throughout the novel.
5. Keep a list of characters, their traits, and interactions with each other.
6. Write down any questions you have while reading the book.

#122-American Literature college prep level and #123-American Literature access level:
A Lesson before Dying by Ernest Gaines

A Lesson before Dying is a deep and compassionate novel. A young man who returns to 1940s Cajun country [Louisiana] to teach visits a black youth on death row for a crime he didn't commit. Together they come to understand the heroism of resisting. After reading, answer the following questions. There are no absolutely correct answers, so write your views based on your understanding of the reading. Type out your answers (about a paragraph each) and bring your work to class on the first day of the new school year.

1. What was the lesson learned, and who learned it?
2. The educated people in the town and those who want to "make it" in life need to leave their small town and their plantation life. Knowing this, Grant desperately wants to leave, yet he feels called to stay. At the same time, he wonders if he is doing any good, since things seem to stay the same. What is he doing for his students and his community? What would happen if he left? Would leaving constitute "flight?"
3. What do the radio and the journal represent for Jefferson? Does Grant actually help him become a man?
4. In what way is this story relevant today?

JUNIORS – Class of 2011

#131-Honors British Literature: *The Good Soldier* by Ford Madox Ford **and** *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* by Muriel Spark

These questions form the basis of our opening work, so read carefully and answer completely. This is also your first grade for the new year – 100 points total. The Good Soldier, by Ford Madox Ford
From the introduction to the Barnes and Noble critical edition: Handsome, wealthy, and a veteran of service in India, Captain Edward Ashburnham appears to be the ideal —good soldier and the embodiment of English upper-class virtues. But for his creator, **Ford Madox Ford**, he also represents the corruption at society's core. Beneath the charming, polished exterior lurks a soul well-versed in the arts of deception, hypocrisy, and betrayal. Ashburnham and his wife Leonora, along with their friends Edward and Maisie Dowell, form a social quartet that stands for something much larger – all that is wrong with the world. The story is narrated by the naïve and unreliable Edward Dowell, who is either unable, or unwilling to see the truth around him. He portrays a society much like our own: dedicated to pleasure and convinced of its own superiority. The writer J.M. Coetzee describes the narrative as a "house of cards," which creaks and threatens to disintegrate with every step. Answer as completely as possible. You will write about a page and a half,

typed and double-spaced, for each book. Writing tips: do not repeat the question. Get right to the point, and **don't dare** say something as pedantic as —In this essay I will

1) Edward Dowd is horribly unreliable, and can only present limited and prejudiced views of the story. Yet, for precisely that reason, it is his narration that makes this story work. Considering the different possible narrators, why did Ford select Dowd? How does *'not knowing'* the whole truth keep the story moving forward and keep us, the readers, interested?

2) Honor is a word that's much used, and much abused, not only in the time of the First World War, but in our time as well (think of Bill Clinton, or Elliot Spitzer, or the continuing debate over the war in Iraq - or the war of my youth, Vietnam). What does *honor* mean to the characters in this book? Which, if any, do you find honorable? Which do you find dishonorable?

3) There are lots and lots of songs about people *'fooling themselves'* (Styx and Eve6 come to mind). Which characters *'fool themselves'* in this story? (I don't care that you turned your back on me, I care that you turned your back on you, says Eve.)

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie, by Muriel Spark Spark has written a deceptively simple/complex novel, taking a straight timeline and chopping it into little pieces which she mixes and matches. The story is ostensibly about a small group of Scottish school girls who come under the power and influence of one Miss Jean Brodie, a self-assured, self-centered, and domineering spinster. She may also be one of the most self-deluded characters in 20th century literature. She expects complete loyalty from her set of girls, and spends most of the book trying to figure out which one betrayed her (It's Sandy Stranger, but you'll find out soon enough!). The book is also about doing what's right, finding yourself, and living with the choices you make.

1) Irony is a literary technique in which the audience knows, or understands, more than the characters involved. There is much irony in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. Discuss three ways in which the reader is more aware of what is happening than the characters are. (For instance, is it ironic that Miss Brodie idolizes the Italian government? Does Spark draw parallels between the girls and their teachers, between different teachers, or between teachers and other figures in the news?)

2) Themes of innocence and betrayal run throughout this novel. Which characters do you feel are the most *innocent*? Which characters are *betrayed*? Why? Be specific, use quotes.

3) Creating empathy for a non-empathetic character is a difficult task for a writer to achieve (how does Dickens make you empathize with Fagin, or Shakespeare make you feel [almost] sorry for Macbeth?). In *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, Spark creates a complex, interesting character. In what ways do you empathize and identify with Miss Brodie? In what ways do you *not* empathize with her?

#132-British Literature college prep level: *1984* by George Orwell

Please answer each of the following questions with one or two good paragraphs (approx 150 words each), typed. Have your work ready to hand in on the first day of classes.

1. Write a comparison of Winston and Julia showing the differences in how they rebel against the Party.
2. Of all the horrors described in *1984*, which one do you think would be the hardest to bear?
3. The novel was futuristic when it was written. Identify any elements that Orwell was warning his readers about which you see present in our society today.

134-Investigations in British Literature access level: *Animal Farm* by George Orwell

This story is an allegory, a work of literature in which characters and events represent abstract qualities, such as greed, or real people and events. Allegories are written to entertain and to teach a lesson or moral principle. Keep a journal concerning your reading that answers these questions or topics:

1. a list of the characters and what they might stand for
2. the significance of the title
3. explain the Seven Commandments
4. what problems in society the novel comments on

SENIORS – Class of 2010

#141-Advanced Placement English: *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver and *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf

1. Read *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver – Keep a reader response journal in which you record your reactions to each of the main characters who take turns narrating the novel: Orleana Price (mother), Leah, Ruth May, Rachel, and Adah (her daughters). Write a short paper (approximately 350-400 words, typed, double spaced) explaining the relationship of any **one** of these characters with Nathan Price – husband of Orleana and father of the four girls. This paper is due the first day of class. You do not need to hand in the journal responses, just the essay, but they should help in the class discussion.

2. *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf This novel is considered a psychological novel, written in a style called stream of consciousness, so do not look for a plot. As you read, notice that it is the interior lives of the principal characters which is the heart of the book. Respond to the reading by answering the following questions, writing a paragraph or two for each – typed, double spaced. Also due the first day of class.

1. What qualities of family life does Woolf portray through the three parts of the novel?
2. Which character captures your interest the most and why?
3. What does the novel suggest about the connection between art and life?

4. Explore a question that the novel raises for you.

#142-Senior Honors English: *Revolutionary Road* by Richard Yates
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Answer thoroughly and with panache – this is the first grade of your final year.

Revolutionary Road is an evocative portrayal of the opulent desolation of the American suburbs. It's the story of Frank and April Wheeler, a bright, beautiful, and talented couple who have lived on the assumption that greatness is only just around the corner. With heartbreaking compassion and remorseless clarity, Richard Yates shows how Frank and April mortgage their spiritual birthright, betraying not only each other, but their best selves.

-- synopsis from Barnes and Noble.com

1) The novel starts with an amateur theater performance. Why does Yates begin the book with a poorly acted stage play? How does this set the scene for what is to follow? In what ways are Frank and April characters in a play?

2) Following World War II, American society became consumer driven and quite conservative. The stereotypical American dream of a suburban home, a car, and a happy family was reinforced nightly with television shows like *'Ozzie and Harriet'* and *'Father Knows Best.'* Men worked, women stayed home, children were obedient and happy. How does Yates view this ideal life? How does he delve beneath the surface to expose the truth, as he saw it?

3) "So much nonsense has been written on suburban life and mores that it comes as a considerable shock to read a book by someone who seems to have his own ideas on the subject and who pursues them relentlessly to the bitter end," said a February 1961 review in *The Literary Journal*. More recently, *Revolutionary Road* has been compared with the film *'American Beauty,'* which also took a hard-edged, critical view of suburban yuppie paradise. In both, one of the main characters becomes disenchanted with their lives, and tosses about for something better, some form of happiness. Why are Frank and April unhappy? If you have seen the film, what similarities are there? If you have not seen the film, do you believe the novel is still relevant to today's dot.com consumer-oriented society?

a) Answers should get right to the point – do not repeat the question. b) Use examples and details. Be specific.

c) Responses should be at least about two pages, typed, and double-spaced.

143 Senior Composition (all seniors registered for college prep courses): *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou Read *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou and write the following assignment, due the first week of class: Write a personal essay (400-500 words typed) describing your response to reading *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Include the following elements in your paper: 1.) a thesis statement that represents your most significant feelings or thoughts after reading the book. 2.) specific references to characters, places, and incidents that influenced your thoughts and feelings 3.) a concluding paragraph that evaluates the appropriateness of this autobiography as assigned reading for high school students.